

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 00787

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, MX
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP AWARDS MEDAL TO PRESIDENT
CARTER

REF: A) MEXICO A-46 B) LANE/STARRS LETTER, APRIL 6, 1977

1. ON DECEMBER 10, 1977, EMBASSY HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER ATTENDED A CEREMONY IN CONNECTION WITH HUMAN RIGHTS WEEK SPONSORED BY THE MEXICAN FRONT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, DURING WHICH THE PRESIDENT OF THE ORGANIZATION, BENJAMIN LAUREANO LUNA, ANNOUNCED THAT THE GROUP'S ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS MEDAL WAS TO BE AWARDED TO PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER. LAUREANO ASKED EMBOFF TO REQUEST MOST SUITABLE WAY TO AWARD THE MEDAL TO THE PRESIDENT.

2. EMBASSY HAS HAD SEVERAL CONTACTS WITH LAUREANO AND HAS COME AWAY WITH NAGGING DOUBTS AS TO THE CHARACTER OF LAUREANO AND HIS ORGANIZATION. AS REPORTED REF (A) HE HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN HUMAN RIGHTS CAUSE SINCE 1957 AT LEAST. LAUREANO IS LISTED AS AN INTERNATIONAL ADVISOR TO THE INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS LOCATED IN NEW YORK. HE STATED THAT HE ATTENDED CARTER'S INAUGURATION AT THE
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INVITATION OF AMBASSADOR ANDREW YOUNG, AND SUBSEQUENTLY WAS RECEIVED BY CONGRESSMAN ZABLOCKI, AND BY SECRETARY VANCE. LAUREANO ALSO APPEARS TO BE CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH WILLIAM HIGGS OF THE COUNCIL OF HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS.

3. IN CONNECTION WITH A NONCOMMITTAL REPLY TO LAUREANO'S QUESTION IN PARA 1, EMBOFF REQUESTED FURTHER INFORMATION

ON PAST RECIPIENTS OF THE ORGANIZATION'S HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS. LAUREANO PROVIDED LIST WHICH INCLUDED A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT PERSONAGES NOW DEAD, AND US SUPREME COURT JUSTICE THURGOOD MARSHALL. LAUREANO CLAIMED THAT HIS ORGANIZATION HELPED JUSTICE MARSHALL PREPARE FOR HIS FAMOUS BROWN VS. BOARD OF EDUCATION BATTLE (WHEN LAUREANO ALLEGES MARSHALL WAS VISITING MEXICO'S NATIONAL UNIVERSITY) MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS AGO AND THEN IN 1955 AWARDED MARSHALL THE MEDAL.

4. OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS CONTACTS IN MEXICO SEEM EITHER UN-AWARE OF LAUREANO OR UNSURE OF HIS CLAIMS. IT APPEARS TO EMBOFF THAT LAUREANO'S BASE IN MEXICO MAY BE OF MORE HUMBLE PEOPLE THAN THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH MORE PRESTIGIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS SUCH AS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. THEREFORE, EMBASSY DOES NOT WISH TO UNDERRATE HIM OR HIS ORGANIZATION, IF HIS ONLY SIN IS SELF-EXAGGERATION. IN LAST DISCUSSION WITH EMBOFFS, LAUREANO MENTIONED - RATHER POINTEDLY - THAT NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS FIGHTING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, SUCH AS HIS, NEED FUNDS IN THE FORM OF "UNTIED AID".

5. ACTION REQUESTED: EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE ANY CONFIRMATION OF LAUREANO'S CLAIMS (REF LETTER CONFIRMED THAT HE DID INDEED HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH CONGRESSMAN ZABLOCKI ON JAN 25) OR FURTHER INFO ON HIS REPUTATION. WE ALSO
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REQUEST ADVICE REGARDING A SUITABLE RESPONSE TO BE MADE TO MEXICAN FRONT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS' AWARD TO PRESIDENT CARTER. LAUREANO'S PROPOSAL IS THAT PRESIDENT CARTER ACCEPT THE AWARD IN A FORMAL CEREMONY IN MEXICO CITY ON A DATE AT HIS CHOOSING. LUCEY

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